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SUBJECT: ATTORNEY GENERAL GONZALEZ' FEBRUARY 7 MEETING WITH
ARGENTINE SECURITY CHIEFS

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: On February 7, Attorney General Alberto Gonzales and Ambassador Wayne met with the heads of the Argentine security forces. The Attorney General asked the group about Argentina's experiences with gangs, information sharing, and budgeting. The Argentine security chiefs spoke candidly about the efforts to improve interagency information sharing and coordination and about the serious challenges being posed by the substantial increase of narcotics trafficking. The Attorney General invited the participants to visit the FBI training academy to see federal and local law enforcement cooperation and task forces at work. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) On February 7, Attorney General Alberto Gonzales and Ambassador Wayne, accompanied by emboffs (which included heads of U.S. law enforcement entities at post), met with the heads of the Argentine security forces. The Argentine security chiefs in attendance were Ministry of Interior Under Secretary for Homeland Security Ricardo Colombo, Chief of the Argentine Federal Police Nstor Valleca, National Border Patrol (Gendarmarie) Chief Hctor Schenone, Airport Security Police Chief Dr. Marcelo Sain, and Coast Guard (Naval Prefecture) Chief Carlos Fernandez. Ambassador Wayne welcomed the Attorney General and noted that his visit was a great opportunity to highlight the excellent cooperation between our countries on counternarcotics and counterterrorism and to discuss opportunities for further cooperation.

CRIMINAL ACTIVITY IN ARGENTINA

¶3. (SBU) Attorney General Gonzales said that he was most interested in what the security force chiefs thought were the emerging security threats in Argentina and what the U.S. could do to help combat them. He noted that he had just visited El Salvador, where criminal gangs like Mara Salvatrucha pose a major security threat. The Attorney General said that he knows Argentina does not currently have a problem with gangs like El Salvador or the United States do, and he wanted to know why. Although Argentina does not have a problem with gangs, Schenone explained that criminal activity in Argentina has increased since the creation of Mercosur and the resulting free movement of people between member states. He noted that this free movement was a major benefit to honest people, especially in the tri-border region, but that it has also facilitated the movement of criminals between the Mercosur

countries. Sain observed that he doubts Argentina has either a significant terrorist presence or a problem with terrorism financing in the tri-border region.

INFORMATION SHARING WITH U.S. EXCELLENT, AMONG AGENCIES NEEDS IMPROVEMENT

¶4. (SBU) Attorney General Gonzales asked the group about the extent of information sharing on the domestic and international levels. Schenone said that counternarcotics information sharing with the U.S. is excellent. While Schenone said that usually interagency sharing is ordered by the judges that run investigations, Fernandez pointed out that Argentina does not have an equivalent capability to the El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC). Fernandez explained that the agencies represented at the table all have access to one another's information, but that Argentina lacks a centralized criminal intelligence filing system. Colombo said that a national criminal intelligence network is currently under development and should improve information sharing, including among the provinces.

¶5. (SBU) The Attorney General asked if Argentina lacks the laws to allow better information sharing, or if it just lacks the mechanisms to do it. Sain indicated that Argentina's national intelligence law does not provide for information sharing. He noted that the law's main purpose was to develop a strategic intelligence capability, but so far tactical police intelligence capabilities have been neglected. He also noted that good police intelligence that exposes criminal activity is frequently viewed as a barometer for police performance, and thus swept under the rug to prevent the inference that more crime equals less successful police work. Sain said this leads to inaccurate depictions of criminal activity, such as drug trafficking within Argentina. He added that the problem is exacerbated by their leadership always being focused on short-term

emergencies instead of long-term trends. Sain said that the biggest improvement would come from increased investment in training, personnel, and technical resources.

THE FIGHT AGAINST NARCOTRAFFICKING AND THE NEED FOR GREATER FINANCIAL INVESTIGATIONS

¶6. (SBU) On the issue of budgets, Attorney General Gonzales noted that the Department of Justice shares the same budgeting frustrations as the security forces in Argentina. Sain explained that, at least in the Airport Security Police, they have tried to plan their budget well to maximize their ability to combat rising drug trafficking in Argentina. He said that they have noticed a major increase in domestic consumption of the drugs transiting Argentina on their way to European markets.

¶7. (SBU) Vallega of the Federal Police noted that there is a serious lack of financial investigations, which he believes can help combat drug trafficking by going after the money. Sain said that he had experience working on the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) and that suspicious activity reports (SARs) were not helping to track illicit money. The Attorney General asked if Sain thought the SARs were harmful. Sain said that the FIUs would be more helpful if they could share information and serve as a technical expertise resource on financial crimes.

AN INVITE TO WASHINGTON

¶8. (SBU) Attorney General Gonzales thanked the panel for their time and for sharing their experiences and opinions. He closed the meeting by inviting the participants to visit the FBI training facility in the U.S. to see first-hand task force operation and federal and local police cooperation.

¶9. (U) The Attorney General has not cleared on the language of this cable.

WAYNE